

Documents on Diplomacy: Resources

Section I: Revolutionary Era Diplomatic & Governmental Terms

Diplomatic & Governmental Terms

Alliance A formal pact or agreement between nations, especially for the purpose of supporting each other against military threats from other nations, or in times of war.

Ally The term used to describe a nation which has entered into an agreement or treaty with another nation for the purposes of mutual support.

Ambassador The official representative from one country to another. An Ambassador is the highest ranking official assigned to live in a foreign country for an extended period of time. In the United States, an Ambassador is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The title of Ambassador was first used in the United States in 1893. Prior to that, the highest ranking American diplomats were Ministers Plenipotentiary.

Articles of Confederation The first constitution of the United States. Proposed in 1776, the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union were finally ratified in 1781. The Articles proved to be too weak to be an effective government.

Cabinet Department A department of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government. Each department is headed by one of the President's top advisors, known as the Cabinet. The Department of State is the oldest Cabinet Department.

Committee of Secret Correspondence A subcommittee of the Continental Congress that handled relations with foreign governments. Its members were: Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Harrison V, Thomas Jefferson, John Jay, and John Dickinson.

Continental Congress The governing body of the United States during the American Revolution. It was

originally a convention of delegates called to discuss differences over taxation matters with England.

Constitution The document written by the Constitutional Convention in 1787 that defines the fundamental principles, laws, structure, functions, and limits of the Federal Government of the United States. It was ratified in 1788 and has been amended just 27 times.

Department of State The United States Government department responsible for advising the President on formulating foreign policy, implementing the President's foreign policy, and conducting foreign relations with other nations.

Diplomacy The term is used to describe the practice of conducting relations with other nations, such as negotiating treaties, alliances, or agreements.

Diplomat An individual who is appointed by a government to represent its interests and to conduct its relations with another government. An Ambassador is the highest ranking U.S. Department of State diplomatic representative to another nation.

Diplomatic Corps Those engaged in on-going or specific official diplomatic efforts. Included are the Secretary of State, ambassadors, and special envoys to other nations and their staff members who support the work of diplomacy.

Diplomatic Mission An individual or group sent by a government to conduct negotiations or establish relations with another country. A diplomatic mission can be temporary or permanent.

Dispatches Official messages sent with speed between a government and its overseas diplomats or between nations.

Embassy The official headquarters of a government's Ambassador and other representatives to another country. It is usually located in the capitol of the other country.

Envoy An agent sent by a government or ruler to transact diplomatic business.

Foreign Policy The official views and policies of a government regarding its relations with other nations. In the United States, foreign policy is developed by the President, with the advice of the Secretary of State and others, and is implemented by the Department of State and any other officials designated by the President.

Hostility A feeling or state of antagonism or overt acts of warfare; conflict, opposition, or resistance in thought or principle.

Letter of Credence A formal letter sent from one head of state, such as the United States, to another nation naming a diplomat as ambassador or head of the nation's diplomatic mission.

Letters of Marque & Reprisal A government license that allowed private ships to attack and capture enemy vessels and then sell them for profit. Privateering was considered an honorable profession unlike piracy, which was unlicensed.

Minister Plenipotentiary A diplomat with the authority to represent a head of state but of a lower status than an Ambassador. Until 1893, diplomats who headed American missions overseas only carried the title of Minister Plenipotentiary. The complete title is "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary."

Negotiate The term refers to discussions between individuals, groups, or nations that are conducted for the purpose of arriving at an agreement on a particular set of terms or actions.

President As the highest ranking elected official of the United States, the President is the leader of the nation and the chief of the executive branch of the U.S. Government.

Secretary of State Appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate as an adviser on foreign policy and diplomacy. The Secretary of State is a member of the Cabinet and is the head of the Department of State.

Treaty A formal agreement between two or more countries or states, in reference to terms of peace or trade and any limitations associated within the agreement.

Historical Events

Battle of Saratoga Americans won this 1777 battle in upstate New York by defeating the British army of General Burgoyne. News of the American victory convinced the French to sign a Treaty of Alliance and openly provide aid to the American rebels.

Common Sense An influential pamphlet published by Thomas Paine in 1776. An American "best seller," *Common Sense* helped convince the colonists to fight for independence.

French & Indian War The American name for the war between the British and the French in North America, 1754-63. The war began during an encounter between the two sides under the command of a young George Washington.

King William's War The North American segment of the European War of the Grand Alliance, 1688-1697. Fighting encompassed British and French colonies of New France, Acadia, New England, and their Native American allies.

Queen Anne's War The name used by Americans for the North American theater of operations of the European War of Spanish Succession, 1702-1713.

Yorktown The final major battle of the American Revolution in 1781. The combined Franco-American force defeated the British army under General Cornwallis in a decisive engagement.